Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and Visitor Center

Front-End Evaluation

Prepared for Amaze Design, Inc.,
the National Park Service, and
the Alabama Department of Transportation
and Federal Highways Administration

Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. April 2003

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents and analyzes findings from a front-end research study conducted for Amaze Design, Inc., the National Park Service, and the Alabama Department of Transportation and Federal Highways Administration regarding their plan for the Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail Visitor Center. The evaluation, designed by Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A), provides exhibition developers with reactions from potential visitors to the exhibition ideas. The findings here are among the most salient. Please read the body of this report for a fuller presentation of findings.

Participant Characteristics

RK&A interviewed 28 U.S. Space & Rocket Center visitors and 28 Civil Rights Institute visitors. Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 69 and the sample included approximately equal numbers of females and males. More than one-half of all respondents were visiting in a group of adults and children, and the majority of respondents were not residents of Alabama. While the majority of visitors to the Space & Rocket Center were Caucasian, the majority of visitors to the Civil Rights Institute were African-American.

Knowledge and Perceptions About Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s

Most respondents described race relations in the 1950s and 1960s as difficult, using words such as "turbulent," "hostile," or "strained." Many said social segregation contributed to racial tension, and some Civil Rights Institute respondents recalled incidents of prejudice that they or a family member had experienced. Some respondents, particularly respondents from the Space & Rocket Center, could not describe the state of race relations during this time and cited their youth, where they lived, or their situation as the reason. Some respondents from both sites commented that racial relations have improved since this historical period.

Respondents shared experiences of living in a segregated environment, living through school integration, and incidents of racial harassment of varying levels. While the majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents could describe experiences or memories regarding segregation or racial prejudice, the majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents could not. Some respondents who could not share personal experiences said that their race (white) or where they lived was the reason they did not experience segregation or racial prejudice.

While the majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents said that racial relations in the South in general were more turbulent than elsewhere in the country during this time, less than one-half of Space & Rocket Center respondents said that this was the case (most of these respondents said they were not familiar with Alabama during this time and therefore could not respond to the question). Respondents from both sites who saw a difference between race relations in the South and elsewhere in the country said that racism was more blatant in the South. Some respondents said they felt as though race relations in Alabama were reflective of other parts of the country during this time period.

Knowledge and Perceptions About the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March

Overall, most respondents said they were either unfamiliar with the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March or had only a vague idea of what the march was about based primarily on the name of the march. Some respondents, mostly from the Civil Rights Institute, were familiar with the march, including one man who had participated in it.

When asked to explain what the march was about or what happened historically, more than one-half of all who responded could describe something significant pertaining to the march, either what occurred during the march or why it was important. Some respondents talked about the resistance that marchers faced, including physical violence. Some respondents talked about the restrictions that prevented blacks from voting and the march's importance in securing the right to vote. Some respondents could not talk about the march in much depth.

Some respondents commented that thoughts regarding "misrepresentations of the march" depend upon one's perspective, just as perceptions of race relations also depend on one's perspective.

Current Attitudes and Opinions

The majority of respondents at both the Civil Rights Institute and the Space & Rocket Center said that race relations have improved over the years. However, most of these respondents also believe that race relations could be better, and some, particularly respondents at the Civil Rights Institute, think that racism still exists, often subtly, in American society. A few respondents talked about the need for better communication among people of different races. A few people interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center suggested that some people place too much emphasis on combating what they perceive as racism.

While respondents at the Space & Rocket Center talked generally about the importance of civil rights and treating all people equally, Civil Rights Institute respondents reflected on civil rights personally, talking about the struggle that they and others before them have faced in fighting for civil rights. Civil Rights Institute respondents were interested in securing more equality for their children, some specifically mentioning affirmative action and other systems for promoting equality. A few respondents at the Space & Rocket Center said that some of these same civil rights issues are overemphasized in our country. While all Civil Rights Institute respondents were concerned with civil rights, some interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center were not concerned about civil rights.

Respondents overwhelmingly said that voting is important to them because it gives them a voice, and some discussed the importance of using their vote to affect their governing representation and legislation. Some respondents, particularly at the Civil Rights Institute, talked about the struggle some people endured to ensure the right to vote and two respondents cited the importance of the Voting Rights Bill, set to expire in a few years.

When asked about contemporary voting rights issues, respondents at both sites talked about problems in the polling and election process, increasing voter turnout, the expiration of the

Voting Rights Bill, and the state of campaign financing. Civil Rights Institute respondents were more likely to respond to this question compared to Space & Rocket Center respondents, many of whom said they could not name any current voting rights issue of concern.

Interpretive Themes

The majority of respondents from both sites said nothing in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March Interpretive Plan surprised them, offended them, or appeared as false or biased. When asked, Civil Rights Institute respondents were more likely to have an emotional reaction to the Interpretive Plan compared to Space & Rocket Center respondents. Among respondents who had an emotional reaction, most were moved by the risks participants in the march took to ensure civil rights for all Americans.

Respondents' interest in the personal sacrifice of marchers is also reflected in the themes they selected as most interesting. Respondents at both sites selected Theme 2, "the willingness of individuals to risk everything," as most interesting more often than any other theme. Respondents at both sites were also interested in the "use of nonviolent protest" in the Civil Rights Movement since nonviolence connects the movement to worldwide efforts to secure civil rights. Some respondents at the Civil Rights Institute were also interested in the "struggle of African-Americans to realize the dream and right of full citizenship;" however, no respondents at the Space & Rocket Center selected this theme as most interesting. Most respondents at both sites did not select a theme as least interesting.

The Voting Rights Act is important to some respondents, particularly those interviewed at the Civil Rights Institute, because it gives them a voice. Respondents discussed how the Act gives all citizens the opportunity to elect officials and influence legislation. African-American respondents also talked about the Act granting them the right to vote. Some respondents, particularly those interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center, talked more generally about the Act allowing for greater equality among Americans.

DISCUSSION

This evaluation's goal was to better understand potential visitors' reactions to the exhibition's content and interpretive plan to assist exhibition developers. This discussion section synthesizes report findings regarding the evaluation's objectives.

Two Audiences

The National Park Service (NPS) anticipates that many different audiences will use the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail and Visitor Center. The NPS foresees that audiences of people with some knowledge and interest in civil rights, and national park visitors without a particular knowledge or interest in civil rights will visit the Visitor Center. RK&A interviewed both audiences for this evaluation to determine what differences, if any, exist between these two groups of potential visitors. While the evaluation intended to include a racial mix of respondents at each Alabama site, the site chosen to represent potential visitors interested in civil rights, the Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, received predominantly African-American visitors during the course of the study, while the site chosen to represent potential visitors without a specialized interest in civil rights, the Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, received predominately Caucasian visitors during the course of the study.

The demographic differences between the two respondent samples may predict demographic differences between these two potential Visitor Center audiences. Unquestionably, respondents' personal experiences with segregation, racism, and prejudice affected their perception of civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s and today. And, as noted by both African-American and Caucasian respondents, black Americans are more aware of racism, both in the past and in the present, compared to white Americans.

Awareness leads to interest. Respondents at the Civil Rights Institute, particularly those most interested in civil rights, and those at the Space & Rocket Center who expressed an interest in civil rights, were also those who recalled experiences with racism. Among Alabama residents in particular, there was a clear division between visitors who had experienced racism and were interested in civil rights, and visitors had not experienced racism and were not interested in civil rights. Among Space & Rocket Center respondents, those from outside Alabama were more likely to express an understanding of the importance of the Civil Rights Movement throughout history (regardless of their experience) compared to Alabama residents, who were more likely to express annoyance at what they perceive as an overemphasis on racial issues.

It is important for exhibition developers to recognize the range of potential visitors' backgrounds, and how personal experiences affect perceptions. For example, a few Space & Rocket Center visitors terminated their interviews quickly when they became aware of the subject. In addition, several Space & Rocket Center respondents expressed strong opinions against what they perceive as excessive attention paid toward racism and civil rights. All of these potential visitors will most likely be unreceptive to the exhibition's subject, no matter how it is presented. As noted in another RK&A study, "visitors exercise considerable control over the messages that they experience in a museum, and a visitor's own ideas strongly influence the

message or meaning they construct from their museum experience."[1] Exhibition developers need to be aware that people have strong opinions about race, particularly in Alabama, and that those prejudiced against the subject will be intolerant of the exhibition's attempt to make this topic relevant to them.

Civil Rights and the Voting Rights March

Respondents' knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement and the Voting Rights March varied. Respondents were most knowledgeable with that which they experienced and, as noted previously, African-American visitors were more likely to have directly experienced prejudice, racism, and segregation compared to other visitors. These experiences were mostly with segregation and school integration, and references to segregation in the exhibition will likely resonate with visitors who have also had similar experiences. While many respondents find civil rights pertinent to contemporary society, some respondents perceive civil rights as a goal that has been reached, rather than an ideal to continue to work toward, and therefore are not concerned about it.

Respondents were less familiar with the march, its purpose, and what occurred during it. Respondents who discussed the march often recalled what they remembered from the event – primarily through media coverage – and these recollections focused on the hate and violence perpetrated against the marchers. Respondents also talked about the purpose of the march, but did so generally, stating that it gave African-Americans the right to vote. While a few respondents understood that the Voting Rights Act prohibits voting restrictions, and a few of those were aware that the Act is soon to expire, the majority stated generally that the Act ensured African-Americans of the right to vote and perhaps did not know the legislation's exact nature. Thus, while visitors may enter the exhibition with some understanding of what happened during the march, they will most likely be less clear about specific reasons for the march. In addition, because respondents' knowledge of the march was somewhat limited, they did not think critically about the historical representation of the march and, mostly likely, neither will the general visitor.

Voting

Regardless of their experience, background, or race, respondents were passionate about their right to vote. The right to vote is shared among all adult American citizens, and provides the most accessible entry point for adult Visitor Center audiences. Even respondents who were disinterested or biased against civil rights issues related to the importance of voting rights. Thus, voting may be the avenue, or most common denominator, through which to entice the widest visiting audience into the exhibition, including those initially reluctant to civil rights topics. While visitors may have strong feelings about the importance of voting as a right, the exhibition presentation will need to connect this right to the larger issue of civil rights, which some visitors may initially discount as insignificant.

[1] Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (2002). "For Which It Stands: The American Flag in American Life; Results from Visitor Interviews." Unpublished manuscript. Washington, DC: The National Museum of American History, Behring Center.

People identify with human struggle, but have more difficulty doing so when they perceive the struggle as different from their own, or outside their experience. By connecting with visitors through their right to vote, and then discussing the sacrifices some segments of the American population endured to secure that right (including not only African-Americans but also perhaps other segments of the population who fought for the right to vote, including women), the ordeal that Selma to Montgomery marchers endured may become more personal to those who originally felt distant from the subject. Consequently, the exhibition offers the potential for some visitors to gain a wider understanding of civil rights as important to all peoples.

Interpretive Plan

Respondents connected strongest to the personal accounts of the interpretive plan, particularly the sacrifices and risks marchers faced during this historical event. Some respondents were also interested in the use of nonviolence as a universal form of protest. Both these ideas have the potential to affect an audience beyond those with a particular interest in or knowledge of the Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March, because they enable the visitor to connect with the "struggle." While some visitors may find it difficult to place themselves in the march's historical context, hearing the experiences of marchers, the risks they took, and the difficulties they encountered may help visitors connect more personally to the event. These findings suggest that personal accounts of marchers may be an effective interpretive strategy with visitors.

Respondents were not critical of the Interpretive Plan. As mentioned previously, people have difficulty thinking critically about something with which they are unfamiliar. Likewise, visitors are also less interested in unfamiliar subjects. While some respondents said they were less interested in Selma as the starting point for the march, the exhibition developers will need to communicate why this fact is interesting and important. In another study conducted by RK&A, respondents initially indicated a lack of interest in a particular subject, but they became quite interested after learning more about the topic.[2] In particular, some visitors will become interested in a subject because they are intellectually curious; others will need to know how a subject relates to their lives. Thus, facilitating visitors' personal connection with the topic through exhibition presentation will provide the most successful exhibition experience for the widest possible audience.

[2] Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (2002). "Breakthroughs: Front-end Evaluation." Unpublished manuscript. Jersey City, NJ: The Liberty Science Center.

INTRODUCTION

This front-end evaluation, conducted by Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A), presents and analyzes findings from a study conducted for Amaze Design, Inc., the National Park Service, and the Alabama Department of Transportation and Federal Highways Administration regarding their plan for the Selma to Montgomery Historic Trail Visitor Center. This evaluation study elicited potential visitors' reactions to the subject for the exhibits as well as the interpretive themes. The evaluation's objectives were to:

- Determine adults' general knowledge and misconceptions about segregation, racial attitudes, and civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s;
- Determine adults' general knowledge and misconceptions about the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March;
- Elicit peoples' recollections and connections to the march, including emotions and opinions;
- Understand to what extent adults think critically about the historical representation of the march (i.e. misrepresentations of events and involvement of certain individuals and groups);
- Understand peoples' opinions and attitudes toward current race relations and civil rights issues;
- Understand people's attitudes toward voting as a civil right;
- Gauge peoples' reactions to the general plan of the historic trail including interpretive themes; and
- Compare responses between those who do and those who do not have knowledge or interest in civil rights.

METHODOLOGY

To understand potential visitors' reactions to the exhibition subject and interpretive themes, evaluators conducted in-depth interviews with visitors to two Alabama museums. Open-ended, in-depth interviews encourage and motivate interviewees to describe their experiences, express their opinions and feelings, and share with the interviewer the thoughts and ideas about a particular subject (see Appendix A, Interview Guide). Open-ended interviews produce data rich in information because interviewees talk about personal experiences.

Because the National Park Service anticipates that some visitors will have a particular interest in civil rights and others will not, both types of respondents were interviewed for this study. To include both types of respondents, visitors to two different sites in Alabama were interviewed: the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

DATA ANALYSIS AND METHOD OF REPORTING

The interview data are qualitative, meaning that results are descriptive, following from the interviews' conversational nature. In analyzing the data, the evaluator studied the responses for meaningful patterns. As patterns and trends emerged, similar responses were grouped together. Verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) illustrate the thoughts and ideas of interviewees as fully as possible. Within quotations, the evaluator's questions appear in parentheses and an asterisk (*) signifies the start of a different speaker's comments.

Brackets following quotations include the gender, age, and race of participants (for List of Respondents see Appendix B). Each section of the report begins with a summary of the data, shown in **boldface** type. The data and supporting quotations follow the summaries. Data for Space & Rocket Center respondents and Civil Rights Institute respondents are reported separately. Findings within each section are presented in descending order, starting with the most frequently occurring.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

RK&A conducted open-ended interviews with 28 visitors to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center and 28 visitors to the Civil Rights Institute (see Table 1). Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 69 years with a median age of 41. The sample included approximately equal numbers of females and males, although slightly more males were interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center and slightly more females were interviewed at the Civil Rights Institute. More than one-half of respondents were visiting in a group of adults and children, and the majority of respondents were not residents of Alabama.

Not surprisingly, the racial breakdown of visitors to the sites differed. While the majority of visitors to the Space & Rocket Center were Caucasian, the majority of visitors to the Civil Rights Institute were African-American. This difference was somewhat expected based on the location and subject differences between the sites. All interview data are presented separately for each site to better understand the differences between these two audiences.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics (*n* = 56)

Gender	**Space & Rocket Center**	**Civil Rights Institute**	**Total**
Female	11	16	27
Male	17	12	29
Race[1]			
Caucasian	23	3	26
African-American	3	24	27
Other	2	1	3
Group			
Alone	6	3	9
2 adults	7	1	8
3 or more adults	3	5	8
Family group (adults and children)	12	19	31
Residence			
Alabama	8	8	16
Other	20	20	40

[1] Although not indicated here, respondents were asked to indicate their ethnicity as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. All respondents indicated they were non-Hispanic.

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE 1950s AND 1960s

The interviewer asked respondents to describe American race relations in the 1950s and 1960s, share personal experiences they have regarding segregation or racial prejudice, and discuss ways in which racial relations in Alabama were different from or similar to those in the rest of the country during this historical period.

Most respondents described race relations in the 1950s and 1960s as difficult, using words such as "turbulent," "hostile," or "strained." Many cited social segregation as contributing to racial tension, and some Civil Rights Institute respondents recalled incidents of prejudice that they or a family member had experienced. Some respondents, particularly respondents from the Space & Rocket Center, could not describe the state of race relations during this time and cited their youth, where they lived, or situation as the reason. Some respondents from both sites commented that racial relations have improved since this historical period.

Respondents shared experiences of living in a segregated environment, living through school integration, and experiencing incidents of racial harassment of varying levels. While the majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents could describe experiences or memories regarding segregation or racial prejudice, the majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents could not. Some respondents who could not share personal experiences said that their race (white) or where they lived was the reason they did not experience segregation or racial prejudice.

While the majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents said that racial relations in the South in general were more turbulent than elsewhere in the country during this time, less than one-half of Space & Rocket Center respondents said that this was the case (most said they were not familiar with Alabama during this time and therefore could not respond to the question). Respondents from both sites who saw a difference between race relations in the South and elsewhere in the country said that racism was more blatant in the South. Some respondents said they felt as though race relations in Alabama were reflective of other parts of the country during this time period.

Civil Rights Institute Respondents

Almost all Civil Rights Institute respondents described race relations in the 1950s and 1960s as awful. Respondents used strong descriptive words such as "horrible," "hostile," and "ungodly" when describing the overall atmosphere of the time (see the first, second, and third quotations). Some respondents said that segregation contributed to an atmosphere of prejudice and discrimination, and some shared stories about segregation and prejudice, either from their experiences or from the experiences of friends and family members (see the fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations).

> [Race relations at this time were] very bad. Very bad. Very bad. As far as segregation and the racial division between blacks and whites and other groups, I would say it was pretty bad. [Female, 28, African-American]

> [Race relations] in the 1950s and the 1960s? Horrible. Absolutely horrible. . . To be able to treat each other the way we did at that time period was just unbelievable. [Male, 48, Mixed]

> Describe it? There is no description. It was ungodly. (Tell me more.) There's nothing else to say. It was awful. [Female, 48, African-American]

> All of the high schools at that time were basically either white or black. And the black high schools or elementary schools were very inferior to the white [schools]. We got the books that were passed on after they were outdated. When they began to integrate the schools, then, of course, the whites began to move to the outer portions of Birmingham. . . It became what was known as 'separate but equal' – but there's no such thing as equality when you have separatism. [Male, 60, African-American]

> I was born in '59, so I remember having to ride on the back of the bus – that type of thing. Race relations were not a good thing. [Female, 43, African-American]

> I was in part of the movement from Selma to Montgomery. I was in the march. And it's hard to describe. It's just so much hatred. You just wonder how you could teach so much love and have people hate you just because of the color of your skin. [Male, 65, African-American]

Some Civil Rights Institute respondents talked about the current state of race relations when describing conditions of the past. A few respondents talked about how race relations have steadily improved over the years, and are continuing to improve (see the first and second quotations). One respondent said that while racism in the 1950s and 1960s was "overt," current racism is more subtle (see the third quotation). Finally, one respondent said that while she thought prejudice was common during that time, since she was not alive during the 50s and 60s her perceptions were not based on first-hand experience.

> I was around during that period of time. The 1950s were really bad in the South. Sixties – a little better. I think each decade it seems to get better. I think that's what's so nice about a place like this [Civil Rights Institute]. You get a chance to come and see and reflect on where you have been, and those people that helped you get where you are. [And it gives] you a sense of past and future at the same time. I have seen a great change in race relationships. [Male, 51, African-American]

> Race relations? I don't think they were very good. I mean, given the stuff that went on and the way things were handled. It's a lot better today compared to what they were then. And I think we're progressing in a lot of areas. And we'll

> continue to progress, and I think things will be a lot better as time goes on. [Male, 19, African-American]
>
> Well, the difference is that in the 1950s, it [prejudice] was more overt. Now it's a little bit more covert. It's still there, but it's hidden. It's more subtle. Whereas in the 1950s, there was no need to be [subtle]. People were protected by law. [Female, 58, African-American]

The majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents described experiences or memories regarding segregation or racial prejudice, either incidents they or family members had experienced (see the first quotation). Many of these respondents recalled segregated public places (see the second and third quotations). Some respondents talked about integration of public schools, and the resistance to integration and subsequent tension (see the fourth and fifth quotations). As shown in the sixth and seventh quotations, a couple had experienced racially motivated vandalism and violence. Finally, approximately one-fifth of Civil Rights Institute respondents could not describe any experiences with segregation or racial prejudice, most explaining that the area where they lived was not as significantly affected by racial discord.

> I was in a store and I walked past this older white lady, and she kind of grabbed her bag and moved like I was going to do something to her. That was really the first time that I ever really experienced it, because I really grew up around all black people and Puerto Rican people. [Female, 21, African-American]
>
> I remember seeing signs for drinking fountains – white and black. And I remember my brothers were shocked – because we came from Chicago – to see anything like that. [Female, 85, Caucasian]
>
> I remember my mom and I were going to wash our clothes, and we came to this laundromat where there were signs. One said, 'Whites Only' and the other said 'Coloreds.' My mom joked around, saying, 'Well, I'm going to just bring all my white sheets and stuff in the white side.' So that kind of stuck to my mind, to know that there was a difference. [Male, 44, African-American]
>
> I attended a private school in Keysville, Georgia, which was run by the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. And the school was started because the schools in my hometown were threatening to close rather than integrate. [Female, 58, African-American]
>
> I went to high school, and schools had not been integrated in my area, but I was one of 12 [blacks] in the whole school that I went to. So there were a lot of hostilities. There were a few that were openly receptive and treated us fairly, but there was a lot of tension. [Female, 40, African-American]
>
> Where I went to school, the fraternity that I was a part of – the fraternity house was burned down in a predominantly white university, and – but the university

> stepped in and we was able to get another fraternity house still on Fraternity Row. So I had the experience of dealing with that. [Male, 33, African-American]
>
> I witnessed the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and the bombing of the motel. Dr. King's brother was my minister at the First Baptist Church in Insley, and the parsonage was burned – or bombed. [Male, 60, African-American]

The evaluator asked respondents how they thought racial relations in Alabama were different from or similar to the rest of the country during the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents said that racial relations in the South were more turbulent than elsewhere in the country during that time. Some said that acts of racism were more overt and severe in the South (see the first, second, and third quotations). A few respondents attributed some of the differences to a larger black population in the South, which led to a more vocal opposition to the status quo (see the fourth quotation). A few respondents said they believed racial relations in Alabama were similar to those elsewhere in the country (see the fifth quotation) and two respondents said they did not know if Alabama was similar to or different from other areas (see the sixth quotation).

> It just seems that it [racism] was a lot more blatant [in Alabama]. Where in other parts of the country it was a lot more subtle, here it was just blatant. [Male, 48, Mixed]
>
> [Someone] came down to Alabama – came down to Mississippi to visit his aunt. And he whistled at a white woman. And, see, he used to do that up North – it was not a big deal. But down here, it was a big deal. So in return, he got pretty much – as they say – slaughtered. They cut him up. They hung him. They dismembered his body – it was just awful. And his mom said he just came down here for summer vacation. So it's a big difference. It's a big difference. [Female, 35, African-American]
>
> Alabama was blatant racism. It was known. You could see it. It was right out in the open, with the Jim Crow laws and everything. [Female, 48, African-American]
>
> I think there were a lot [of] differences, because there was a lot of division in the South as well as in the North, but more prevalent in the South – it was trying to become a movement, and blacks were trying to establish themselves. Whites were already in the North, and it was a small minority of black people in the North, so it wasn't [as] much going on in the North as in the South. It was a big movement here, so I think that's where it all began – the South. [Female, 28, African-American]
>
> I don't really know, because I never really came here but according to what I would see on TV, read in the newspaper, and hear on the radio it was basically the same. [Female, 63, African-American]

> Well, I have no way of judging. I had never been here [until this visit]. [Female, 85, Caucasian]

Space & Rocket Center Respondents

The majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents described race relations in the 1950s and 1960s as difficult. Some respondents used words such as "strained" and "tumultuous" when describing the overall atmosphere of the time (see the first, second, and third quotations). Some respondents cited instances of legal and social segregation that caused tension between people of different races (see the fourth and fifth quotations). As shown in the sixth quotation, a few respondents focused on the difficulties blacks faced during this time. While a few respondents stated that racial relations were not good during this time, they also commented that racial relations were better than they had been previously, and that perhaps different geographical regions accounted for differences in racial relations across the country (see the seventh quotation).

> [Race relations were] tumultuous. Turbulent. Bad. [Female, 48, Caucasian]

> [Race relations were] strained. There were difficult racial times in the 1950s and 1960s. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

> As I recall, it was a rather tumultuous time. As I remember, [there was] a lot of unrest, dissention. (Is there anything in particular that you can recall about that time?) I have a terrible memory. Just . . . with George Wallace and all of that unrest in Montgomery, and Rosa Parks and all that. [Female, 60, Caucasian]

> Race relations back then were not good. (How so?) Well, I was a kid back then, and it was one of those things where you kind of kept to your own. I think for the most part people were brought up to believe that whites stayed whites and the blacks stayed with blacks, and other races stayed within themselves. [Female, 45, Caucasian]

> [Race relations were] very strained. (Tell me what you mean by strained.) It was changing from segregation to integration, and the blacks were afraid to integrate because of what had happened in the past, and the whites did whatever they could – legal or illegal – to keep the integration from happening. (When you say the whites did whatever legal or illegal – can you give any examples?) Well, there were a lot of white people that supported the integration, but then there were a lot of the really bigoted people that chose not to, and they did the lynchings and even if it wasn't [lynchings] – they would still try to keep black people in their place. [Female, 42, Caucasian]

> [Race relations in the] 1950s and 1960s? Well, they were not what they should be. That's the easiest way to put it. (Can you give me an example of what you think was not the way it should be?) Well, the black people did not have the advantages that they should have. [Female, 69, Caucasian]

> Well, I'm trying to think back to then. I think it was much better than when I was a small child, because, as a small child, I used to see the water drinking fountain for the whites and the drinking fountain for the colored, and the different restrooms and things. I remember one time going to the wrong one and being scolded for it. (Can you describe what you think it might have been like in the 1950s and 1960s?) Well, in the 1950s and 1960s, I think they could all use the same facilities such as restrooms and drinking fountains. And we all – at least where I was at in the 1950s and 1960s, ate in the same restaurants. [Female, 65, Caucasian]

Approximately one-third of Space & Rocket Center respondents could not describe American race relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these respondents said that either they were too young during this time to recall the situation, or that because of where they lived or their particular situation, racial relations did not affect them (see the quotation below).

> I wasn't alive then, so I don't really know. I grew up in an area [where] there weren't too many problems as far as what I know historically went on around us. (Where was that?) Well, I was in Leeds, Alabama, right outside of Birmingham. I grew up about two miles from what they called the black section of town, and so I grew up right in the middle of [it]. So I was always friends with people of different races and stuff. [Male, 40, Caucasian]

The majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents could not describe any personal experiences or memories regarding segregation or racial prejudice. Some of these respondents said that either because of where they lived, or because of their particular circumstances, racial prejudice was not a part of their lives (see the first and second quotations).

> I have not encountered it [racial prejudice] because I've always lived in the North. . . . Living in the North, we didn't see it. We didn't have it. [Female, 65, Caucasian]

> Coming from California, I didn't [have any experiences with racial prejudice]. The way my parents raised me, it just didn't happen. And we had a lot of friends that were of all different races, and so it just wasn't a part of our experience. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

Approximately two-fifths of Space & Rocket Center respondents recalled experiencing segregation or racial prejudice, and some cited specific incidents that they or a family member had encountered. A few talked generally about living in an environment of segregation and racial prejudice, although they did not experience prejudice first-hand (see the first and second quotations). A few respondents, though they had not experienced segregation or racial prejudice, related stories they had been told by a family member (see the third quotation). As shown in the fourth quotation, two respondents recalled incidents of racial prejudice they experienced as whites. Finally, one African-American respondent recalled experiencing racial prejudice when

he was a child (see the fifth quotation), while one Caucasian respondent recalled an experience as a child when her family exhibited prejudice (see the sixth quotation).

> When I was a child growing up, although there were black people that worked in the town, they pretty much knew by reputation that they needed to heading out of town before sundown. It was not good. And there are a lot of black people to this day that will not be caught in the town after dark because they're still afraid that something may happen, even though it wouldn't today. [Female, 45, Caucasian]

> My dad was in the army, and when they went to a specific base even though they were friends with blacks they were told not to walk together, because of the specific area that they were in. (So bases in the South had those restrictions?) Yeah, it was more so in the South than in the North. I came from a school that was a lot less segregated and it really wasn't a problem. I grew up in New York, so it really wasn't a problem up there. [Male, 31, Caucasian]

> Well, my grandmother wasn't allowed to go to school with the white people. They had to go to a school of their own. Blacks went to black schools, whites went to white schools. [Female, 40, African-American]

> I had an unpleasant racial experience when I was a teenager. I was raised in Montana and went to the big city of Seattle and had an unpleasant experience there. . . . My brothers and I were in a local restaurant and had a bunch of Negro kids around us that were giving us a bad time, and pushed us around and stuff, and basically tried to intimidate us. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

> I originally grew up up North and didn't have any issues [or experiences] with it [racial prejudice]. But moving down South, in elementary school, that's when I first experienced it personally first-hand. I was aware that the children didn't want to play with you just for the purpose that you looked different than they did. . . . Some of the kids just flat out told you, 'My parents – or my father – or my mother – said not to hang out with black kids, not to talk to black children,' or they talked about the racial slurs that their parents taught them. [Male, 22, African-American]

> I think I was in elementary school when they started bussing them [black students] and mixing them [into our schools]. So I remember that. I guess that was really the only experience that stands out in my mind. (Do you remember what that was like?) It was different, 'cause I wasn't used to it, and it was a little frightening. There was a little black boy that wanted to put his hands on my legs in third grade, and it was scary. That's really the only thing that I remember. My mother had a conniption fit and said that she would speak with a teacher, and the teacher separated us in class, and that pretty much handled it. [Female, 39, Caucasian]

The evaluator asked respondents how they thought racial relations in Alabama were different from or similar to those in the rest of the country during the 1950s and 1960s. Less than one-half of Space & Rocket Center respondents said that racial relations in the South were different from those in the rest of the country during this time. Some of these respondents, not from the South said racial relations were more problematic in the South (see the first and second quotations). Some of these respondents, from Alabama or elsewhere in the South, described how the South experienced more tension and prejudice because of the legacy of segregation (see the third quotation). As shown in the fourth quotation, a few respondents indicated that this difference may have been due to a higher concentration of blacks in the South. A couple of respondents also said they felt the South was different during the Civil Rights Movement because southern blacks were more vocal in their protest of the social conditions (see the fifth quotation).

> From what you see and what you read, I believe the South – the Deep South – Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana – had a lot more problems with race integration than in the North. [Female, 42, Caucasian]

> Well, I heard Alabama and Mississippi were pretty bad as far as blacks trying to vote in the early 1950s, 1960s, during the Martin Luther King movements. I know they were having some real difficult times. So I know Alabama has a history of race problems. [Male, 29]

> Segregation was the worst in the state of Alabama. Dr. King said many times, 'If you can integrate Birmingham, you can integrate anywhere. If you can get some tranquility and get people to get along in Stone Mountain, Georgia, you can do it anywhere.' . . . Southern states did not want to accept integration, and it was forced on them. Northern states accepted it, even though they may not have wanted it. That's the difference. [Male, 30, African-American]

> Well, as I recall from my memory, it would have been a lot more serious problem here than in a lot of the other parts of the country – maybe just because of the concentration of the blacks in this area. [Female, 60, Caucasian]

> I think that down here in Alabama, as well as a lot of the most southern states, I think people were a lot more comfortable expressing their feelings and opinions about race relations. Whether it was negative or positive, they were more comfortable about expressing it, rather than other places and other areas. [Male, 22, African-American]

A few respondents said that race relations in Alabama were most likely typical of the rest of the country during this period in American history (see the first quotation). Approximately two-fifths of respondents could not respond to the question, some explaining that because they were from another part of the country they could not speculate on racial relations in Alabama (see the second quotation). As shown in the third quotation, one respondent answered the question by expressing her opinion that too much attention is given to discussing race relations.

Well, I think that, you know, the South probably got more negative publicity for having worse relations, but honestly I would say it's similar to what the rest of the country had during that time. [Male, 39, Caucasian]

I have no idea, because I grew up in Arkansas, you know, and I really don't know. [Male, 45, Caucasian]

I never understood what the big deal was. I think people make more out of it [race relations] than they should. And the more I hear about it, the more I dislike about it. [Female, 39, Caucasian]

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE 1965 SELMA TO MONTGOMERY VOTING RIGHTS MARCH

The interviewer asked respondents whether they were at all familiar with the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March, what they thought the march was about, and whether they knew what happened historically. Those familiar with the march were asked what aspects of the event they think are misrepresented.

Overall, most respondents said they were either unfamiliar with the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March or had only a vague idea of what the march was about, based primarily on the name of the march. Some respondents, mostly from the Civil Rights Institute, were familiar with the march, including one man who had participated in it.

When asked to explain what the march was about or what happened historically, more than one-half of those responding described something significant pertaining to the march – either what occurred during the march or why it was important. Some respondents talked about the resistance that marchers faced, including physical violence. Some talked about the restrictions that prevented blacks from voting and the march's importance in securing the right to vote. Some respondents could not talk about the march in much depth.

Some respondents commented that thoughts regarding "misrepresentations of the march" depend upon one's perspective, just as perceptions of race relations also depend on perspective.

Civil Rights Institute Respondents

While two-fifths of Civil Rights Institute respondents said they were familiar with the march, including one respondent who had participated in the march, three-fifths of respondents said either that they were not familiar with the march or had only a vague idea of what it was about.

Approximately two-thirds of Civil Rights Institute respondents could discuss the march and its importance with substance. Some respondents, including the one respondent who had participated in the march, described the violence and hatred the marchers endured (see the first and second quotations). A few focused on the right to vote, and talked about the voting restrictions in place at that time and the importance of the march in securing the right to vote (see the third quotation). As shown in the fourth quotation, a few respondents related facts of what they think occurred during the march. A few respondents also commented on the importance of civil rights, and said that the march played a significant role in obtaining justice (see the fifth quotation). When asked what they thought the march was about, or what happened historically, approximately one-third of those who responded gave brief or vague responses, saying it was about "voting" or "equal rights" (see the sixth and seventh quotations).

> Most of the beaten ones [marchers] then were the white ones, and they got hurt pretty bad because they were what you call white folk's niggers. And any whites

among that, they beat them pretty bad. Real bad. Terrible. And it was a peaceful march, but you could see hatred all the way along. . . . And we got to Montgomery – wasn't no different – was just the start of it, really. We were right in the middle of everything. And – this [is] my opinion. I was there. Somebody may have a different opinion. And from there on, it got rougher. Rougher. More killing. And [a] lot of stuff wasn't even reported that was done – the brutality. [Male, 65, African-American]

It's been quite a number of years since then, but what I remember of Montgomery to Selma is the dog attacks, and this being televised so that people were finally confronted with the pure hatred of it. [Female, 58, African-American]

Well, see, in the South – and it was the same way down in Selma – they [did not want] blacks to vote. So you had to take a written test. And the test was different from – in fact, whites might not have even had to take it if they went in at a certain time – but the test was different for blacks as compared to whites. And even if you passed the test, you then had to pay a poll tax. And so in some of those little rural areas like Selma, they found all kind of ways to keep blacks from voting. And so this is what they [blacks] decided to do, was to have this protest, 'We want to vote. We want to be able to have a voice.' And you had a lot of young men who had come back who fought in the war, and they were deprived of even voting, after they had risked their lives in the war. So the demonstrations then began. [Male, 60, African-American]

Well, I just know that people as a group came together and made a decision to march on the capital. And there were a lot of forces in place attempting to stop them. And they persisted, and they made it to Montgomery. I think the government had to become involved – the federal government had to become involved in terms of providing protection, et cetera. [Male, 48, Mixed]

I think it was about justice and equality. An opportunity to [say], 'If we're going to be governed by these laws, we should have a say-so in what these laws and who are the people that are going to govern us.' I just think it was about fairness, equality and justice. [Male, 33, African-American]

Freedom. Equal rights. [Female, 63, African-American]

I just know it was about voting. [Female, 28, African-American]

Only respondents who were somewhat familiar with the march were asked which aspects of this event they feel are misrepresented. Among the Civil Rights Institute respondents who responded to this question, a few talked about how people of different races see situations from their perspective, including the reasons for the march, what occurred, and the state of race relations throughout history (see the first quotation). A couple of respondents also discussed how

people's perspective on the existence of racism today varies depending on their perspective (see the second quotation).

> Everything, like they say, is relative. So it depends on the person's perspective. And a lot of times, it also depends on the person's race. Having to sit at the back of the bus, or go to the black water fountain, or having worked in a job with the airlines where I was the second black in a position other than cabin service or porter – having lived it, it's difficult to explain sometimes to some other people why you feel the way you do – that just because of your color, you are considered less than human, and people assume that they have the right to treat you in certain ways. [Female, 58, African-American]

> This is my first time in the Civil Rights Institute, and as I walk through this museum, I think it's a place that all judges and all law enforcement people – as a requirement to serve – should have to come to this place because today, right now, still, when you cite that there's racism, when you tell people, 'Hey, this is happening to me because I'm black,' people look at you as if you're crazy, as if you're from another planet. [Male, 48, Mixed]

Space & Rocket Center Respondents

Although some Space & Rocket Center respondents said they were vaguely familiar with the march, the majority said they were not familiar with the march.

Approximately one-half of Space and Rocket Center respondents could discuss the march and its importance with substance. Some of these respondents said the march was about blacks exerting their right to vote and protesting systems that hindered blacks from voting (see the first and second quotations). Other respondents, some of whom lived in the region during the march, talked about what occurred during the march, including acts of violence (see the third, fourth, and fifth quotations). When asked what the march was about, the other one-half of Space & Rocket Center respondents either gave vague responses, such as "voting rights" or said they did not know.

> [The march was about] allowing black people to actually register to vote in that county. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> It was about – even though they [blacks] could vote, a lot of them were afraid to vote because there were repercussions if they did. So it was a coming together to exert their right. Even though they'd been given the right, a lot of them were fearful to do that [vote]. [Female, 42, Caucasian]

> I think they [marchers] got beat up when they tried to cross the bridge the first time, and then they did it again later. [Male, 44, Caucasian]

> That was the march over the Edmond Pentiss Bridge. I teach that in my class, and that march is historic in the fact that that changed the course of how the whole Civil Rights Movement was going, because the United States was embarrassed

> into racial equality. You had all the national media out there watching this march. And Alabama set up all these state troopers on horses sitting at the edge of the bridge. And they attacked with mace and with sticks. And NBC and ABC and CBS broadcast this all over the United States. [Male, 30, African-American]
>
> The thing that I heard the most was the fear of what was going to happen. When it did happen, I remember hearing people say that they were afraid of killing and stuff like that – riots and stuff like that. But as far as what it was about, I can only go by what the history books say. It was about civil liberties as far as voting and stuff like that. . . . [There was] a lot of bitterness from the black community, and – the only word I know is bigotry, from the white community, always trying to hold the black community down. . . . This is the first time I've ever talked about it since I was a kid. [Male, 40, Caucasian]

Only a few Space & Rocket Center respondents responded when asked which aspects of the march they feel are misrepresented. One respondent said that misrepresentations of the march depend on each person's perspective (see the first quotation). One African-American respondent said that he thinks the participation of whites in the march is underrepresented (see the second quotation). As shown in the third quotation, one respondent, also African-American, said that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, participation in this and other civil rights events is over-represented.

> [There is] a hundred-and-eighty-degree difference from the family that I have that live up North and the family that I have here [in Alabama]. I have much more family that lives down in the South, but [with] the family I have that lives in the North, it's a completely different view. [Male, 40, Caucasian]
>
> Well, what's misrepresented in the Selma March is that people don't realize – and I teach my kids this, also, in history class – that a large number of Caucasian and Jewish participated in that march. There was a lot of white people and a lot of Jewish people and other races in that march. And had it not been for those people in that march – had it just been all black people marching, I don't think President Kennedy or anybody else would have stepped in at the pace that they did. You had white people being attacked, as well, for standing up for the black people. So it's misrepresented in the fact that society presents it as all these black people marching and they were attacked. It may have been 75 to 80 percent black, but there were a lot of different races in that crowd that participated. And they should be recognized as participating in it and helping out. [Male, 30, African-American]
>
> I think nowadays we've become lackadaisical in our efforts to teach black history. I think we've watered it down to just teaching about Martin Luther King, Jr. You know, I think everybody knows about his [efforts], but nobody knows about anybody else. There were hundreds of contemporaries and forefathers before Martin Luther King [Jr.]stepped into the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. And I think now all everybody knows Martin Luther King [Jr.]. We have the

holiday, we have schools and boulevards and neighborhoods named after him, but we don't know about anything else. [Male, 22, African-American]

CURRENT ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS

The interviewer asked respondents their perspective regarding the current state of race relations in the United States and their concern regarding civil rights in America. Respondents were also asked how voting is important to them and whether there are any contemporary voting rights issues of concern to them.

The majority of respondents at both the Civil Rights Institute and the Space & Rocket Center said that race relations have improved over the years. However, most of these respondents also said they believe race relations could be better, and some, particularly respondents at the Civil Rights Institute, said they think racism still exists, often subtly, in American society. A few respondents talked about the need for better communication among people of different races. A few people interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center suggested that some people place too much emphasis on combating what they perceive as racism.

While respondents at the Space & Rocket Center talked generally about the importance of civil rights and treating all people equally, Civil Rights Institute respondents reflected on civil rights more personally, talking about the struggle that they and others before them have faced in fighting for civil rights. Civil Rights Institute respondents were interested in securing more equality for their children, some specifically mentioning affirmative action and other systems for promoting equality. A few respondents at the Space & Rocket Center said that some of these same civil rights issues are overemphasized in our country. While all Civil Rights Institute respondents are concerned with civil rights, some respondents interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center said they do not feel as though civil rights is a concern for them.

Respondents overwhelmingly said that voting is important to them because it gives them a voice. Some discussed the importance of using their vote to affect their governing representation and legislation. Some, particularly at the Civil Rights Institute, talked about the struggle some people endured to ensure the right to vote and two respondents cited the importance of the Voting Rights Bill which is set to expire in a few years.

When asked about contemporary voting rights issues, respondents at both sites talked about problems in the polling and election process, increasing voter turnout, the expiration of the Voting Rights Bill, and the state of campaign financing. Civil Rights Institute respondents were more likely to respond to this question compared to Space & Rocket Center respondents, many of whom said they could not name any current voting rights issue of concern.

Civil Rights Institute Respondents

As illustrated by the first quotation, the majority of Civil Rights Institute respondents believe that race relations have improved over the years. However, most of these respondents also believe that racism still exists, sometimes in subtle forms, and that work still needs to be done (see the second and third quotations). While a few respondents felt that there will always be discrimination in some form, some discussed how communication between people of different races is the most effective method for combating prejudice and improving race relations (see the fourth and fifth quotations).

> I think [the current state of race relations] is a lot better than it was back during those times. And things that happened then, I don't think would happen now – not even remotely close to what was going on [then], because we've come so much further as a people and as a nation, no matter the color or race. [Male, 19, African-American]

> As blacks, we've come a long way from where we were, but I think we have a long way to go, as far as being equal to, or even on the same page, as white people or someone else of another race. I think we still have a long way to go. [Female, 28, African-American]

> [Race relations are] so much better, so very much better. But as much as we'd like for it to be, it's definitely not perfect. I still think there's discrimination, totally unjustified. [Female, 56, Caucasian]

> [Race relations] are much better now than they were. There's still a lot of [racism] going on, but most of it is undercover. Black kids now have better opportunities. Now they can go to any school they want to go to. They can become whatever they want to become. That's up to them. They have to study, but it's [racism's] still there. It's still there. It's not so open. But it's still there. And it will always be there. [Female , 63, African-American]

> I think we have made progress. I think we're better off, but I think America still ignores some of the opportunities that [exist] as far as race relations. We'll continue to make strides, but are we where we need to be? Is everyone truly looked as individual? No. And honestly, do I think we'll ever be looked at as individual first? No. I think physical appearance makes a first impression. . . . And then, once you begin to speak and dialogue with that person, then you get to see what type of character this person has. [Male, 33, African-American]

Some respondents described the current state of race relations as needing improvement. A few respondents felt as though racism is still pervasive, but in more subtle forms (see the first quotation). One respondent explained that while racism is still prevalent, people who are discriminated against (such as African-Americans) are more aware of its existence (see the second quotation).

> I think it [the state of race relations] is about the same as it was in the '50s and '60s in a lot of instances. It's more covert, but I think a lot of things are the same.

> It's just that people don't talk about it [racism] as openly. It's subtle. More subtle. [Female, 40, African-American]

> I still think it [race relations] needs a lot of work. Although the color line is not as visible and the race lines aren't as clearly visible, I think they're still there. But you have to be a part of that race, I think, to really feel it, or a part of that religion or ethnicity or whatever to really feel it. But I really think [discrimination is] still prevalent. I think people still have a mind of keeping things the way that they were and not trying to improve because it was comfortable. And it's hard to move into something new, something different. [Female, 21, African-American]

Almost all Civil Rights Institute respondents said that civil rights in America concerns them. Approximately one-third of these respondents said their concern about civil rights is based on their desire for a better life for their children or grandchildren (see the first quotation). Some respondents talked generally of their concern about civil rights, that it is a continuing struggle important for all Americans (see the second quotation). A few respondents talked about racial issues, including equal funding for schooling, affirmative action, and discrimination in the legal system (see the third quotation). As shown in the fourth quotation, a few talked about civil rights from a personal point of view, as something that directly affects them. Two respondents talked about the importance of voting and voting rights in response to this question (see the fifth quotation). Finally, one respondent talked about current issues of civil rights in the wake of September 11th (see the sixth quotation), and one respondent said that civil rights did not concern her (see the seventh quotation).

> I'm very concerned with it [civil rights] – not for me, but for my children. Giving them a fair playing field, letting them have an opportunity to be truly judged by their character and their qualifications. [Male, 33, African-American]

> I think it [civil rights] should be a concern for everybody. I think that's what – the concept of freedom – is what the country's all about. It should have been a concern in 1850 and in 1950 and [should be one] in 2050. I don't think that ever changes. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> [Civil rights are] a concern for me because, still, in the legal system, there are double standards; still in the legal system, if you cannot afford it, there's very little justice; and still in the legal system, if you happen to be one of those people that cannot shell out 20,000 to 60,000 dollars to defend yourself when either rightfully or wrongfully accused, you're given a defense system of attorneys that are just not prepared. And so civil rights is still a major issue. And it's even worse now because when you bring it up now, people look at you as if you're crazy – like it really doesn't exist anymore. [Male, 48, Mixed]

> I've seen the bigotry. And my thing is just to be treated as a decent human being. And that's all civil rights should mean – my rights to be able to go, come, to attend the school I would like to attend, to get the job that anyone else would be

> able to acquire – not because of the color of the skin, but what I'm able to do. [Male, 60, African-American]
>
> We still have a problem with going to the polls, because we have the power to make some changes, but we just don't exercise our rights to do that. And that's the bottom line, I feel that black people really don't understand that, because they feel inside that their vote doesn't count. [Male, 39, African-American]
>
> [Civil rights is] a concern right now, since September 11th. It's what they're doing to people of color from different countries – stopping them, holding them, and just basically upsetting their rights. [Female, 48, African-American]
>
> [Civil rights is] not really a concern for me, because with the way I was raised, whether I'm black or white, I still have to work hard to get everything that I need. It'll be hard for me because I am a black woman, but it just makes it better for me because at least I know I earned it and it wasn't given to me. [Female, 23, African-American]

All respondents interviewed at the Civil Rights Institute said that voting is important to them. Almost all of these explained that voting gives them a voice (see the first and second quotations). Some respondents explained that voting allows them to select people to represent them and form the laws that govern them (see the third and fourth quotations). Some respondents talked about voting as an important right, and a right that people have fought for over the years (see the fifth and sixth quotations). One respondent noted that the Voting Rights Bill, which gives African-Americans the right to vote, will soon expire (see the seventh quotation).

> It's the most important thing. (Why do you say that?) Because when else do you have the opportunity to voice your opinion? It's the only way most people have to voice their opinion. [Female, 56, Caucasian]
>
> And I can remember having the right to vote as an 18-year-old in New York. And I remembered my 18th birthday, going and getting registered to vote, and how important that was to me because I knew that that meant power. [Female, 43, African-American]
>
> Oh, it's very important me, because it allows me to have a direct influence on my government and the laws that I have to live by. And – not only for me, but the laws that my children will be governed by and the leaders that they will have. [Male, 33, African-American]
>
> Voting is very important because that's my way of saying who I want to put in office. And if I don't vote, then I can't be mad about what goes on, and I just have to take it because I didn't take the time out to vote. [Female, 21, African-American]

> It is important because at one time African-Americans, or black Americans, did not have that right to vote. And so many people have worked so hard and given so many things to try to make it where we could vote. And so I take advantage of it personally. [Female, 23, African-American]

> Well, I think voting is important to me because it is a right that my forefathers struggled to get, they went through a whole lot of different things here in Alabama, in the South. And I feel that it would be an injustice to them if we didn't exercise our right to vote. [Male, 39, African-American]

> Voting is very important to me. I think that it should not only be a right, I think it's a privilege and a right, no matter what your color is. And I really have a problem with the fact that blacks only have 25 years to vote and then whatever president is in office at that time has to re-sign a bill. I don't that it should be even an issue for anybody to give us the right or the opportunity. I think we should have the same rights as everybody else. [Female, 28, African-American]

The interviewer asked respondents whether Americans should be concerned about any contemporary voting rights issues. More than one-half of respondents described a voting rights issue of concern to them. A few discussed the recent presidential election that highlighted inconsistencies in the polling and election process (see the first quotation). Two respondents said that getting more people to vote is important. One respondent mentioned the upcoming expiration of the Voting Rights Bill and another was concerned about campaign finance reform (see the second quotation). In response to this question, a few respondents named issues not directly tied to voting rights, such as official use of the confederate flag and affirmative action.

> If you look at the way the president was selected, Florida really needs a lot of help. And in a lot of cities, you will find that the voting process has a lot of flaws. And so there has to be some system or some way of being able to correct some of the ways that voting is carried out. [Male, 60, African-American]

> The thing that is disturbing is the massive amount of money that it seems to take [to campaign], and that eliminates good people. It seems like you have to be very rich or well-connected in order to become a servant of the people. They've just made it almost out of the reach and almost like it's a private club. [Female, 58, African-American]

Space & Rocket Center Respondents

The majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents categorized race relations in the United States as improving, although most of these commented that race relations could be better and some forms of discrimination still exist (see the first and second quotations). A few respondents commented on the ways that racism is still a part of American society (see the third quotation), including one who talked about the importance of acknowledging racial issues (see the fourth quotation). A couple of respondents talked about the importance of continuing a dialogue among people of different races to improve race relations.

I would say it's improving. It has a long ways to go. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

I think it's better than it was, but there are still some undercurrents of animosity. [Male, 44, Caucasian]

There's still some fear, and there's still, I think, some misunderstanding. But I think with the programs that they have now, and with affirmative action, I think that there's not that much of a race problem anymore. (You said fear and misunderstanding. Can you tell me what you mean by that?) If you see a group of white kids in the park and they're all just kind of congregated, you don't really think that much about it. But if you see young black people in the same – doing exactly the same thing, a lot of people are more afraid. They think something bad is going to happen, when they're probably just hanging out with their music and their skateboards just like everybody else. [Female, 42, Caucasian]

I think we have a whole lot of ways to go, because I think that silence is a form of acceptance. And there's so much stuff that still goes on today. . . . Nowadays we've got to a point where race relations is a hush, taboo issue, and, 'If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it at all.' [Male, 22, African-American]

Some Space & Rocket Center respondents talked about race relations as an issue for both blacks and whites. A few said that they feel race is sometimes used as an excuse, and that efforts to challenge racism actually cause more division (see the first, second, and third quotations).

I also see some things that are putting us behind, as far as moving on. I heard on the news not too long ago where somebody that was getting on a plane, the stewardess made a rhyme, 'eeney, meeney, miney, moe, take a seat, we gotta go.' And she said that to some black people that she was trying to get them to take a seat. And they took it as racially offensive because that rhyme's been said in the past where it is racially offensive. I don't know if y'all know what I'm talking about. And I think they're suing the company and all. . . I think a lot of [it is] over-sensitization. . . . People back in Martin Luther King days, they were fighting for real freedom – freedom to vote, freedom to walk into anywhere they want to walk in and eat and do whatever. And now it's come down to, 'You're looking at me wrong, I'm offended, you're racist.' It's taking the focus off the real issues. [Female, 28, Caucasian]

I don't feel affirmative action was right. I feel that each one of us should have been hired based on our qualifications. And yet, you can't make somebody who just simply hates a white person, a black person, an Oriental person – you can't make them hire someone [of one of those races]. [Female, 45, Caucasian]

I think things are better. I think things can – there's still room for improvement. I see a lot of purposeful division, a lot hyphenated words that are unnecessary – such as African-American, Asian-American, Anglo-American – rather than just

> calling people Americans. And using a color to talk about someone's skin is not an insult at all, in my opinion, because I don't see color. I don't see skin color. [Male, 28, Caucasian]

More than one-quarter of Space & Rocket Center respondents said that civil rights in America did not concern them (see the first and second quotations). In response to this question, an additional one-quarter of respondents said that they believe all people should be treated as equals (see the third and fourth quotations). A few respondents explained how they believe civil rights issues, including affirmative action, can be taken to extremes (see the fifth, sixth, and seventh quotations). Two respondents said that they believe civil rights is a concern for them because discrimination still exists. Finally, a few could not answer this question.

> It's not one of my major concerns. I get along with everybody I meet, no matter what race they are. I don't look at their outside. [Female, 48, Caucasian]

> For me? I don't really see what's a concern or anything like that. Civil rights are guaranteed by the Constitution. [Male, 45, Caucasian]

> I believe that we have a common creator, and that all human beings have basic unalienable human rights that we all share. And so from that standpoint, I don't really understand all the racial tensions that happen to occur. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

> Well, being a Christian, I like to see everybody treated equal everywhere. I don't care what nationality they are. [Female, 65, Caucasian]

> I think we're going in the opposite direction, where instead of making everything fair for everyone, giving equal opportunity to everyone, we're saying, 'Because you're this color or that color, then we're going to give you advantages that other people don't have.' And I think that's going the other direction. What's the point of that? [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> There needs to be a balance. I think everyone who is an American has an equal right to opportunities and that sort of thing, but I don't think we want to carry it to such an extreme where there is the reverse discrimination and that sort of thing – just need to be sure and keep a balance there. [Female, 60, Caucasian]

> If someone's civil rights have been violated, then that needs to be investigated and there needs to be action taken. But I think there is abuse of civil rights laws, and that's what concerns me. I think there are certain individuals that will use unrest between races – I hate to say it, but as a meal ticket. [Male, 28, Caucasian]

Almost all Space & Rocket Center respondents described the ways voting is personally important. Most explained that voting is the method by which citizens can express their opinions, and many respondents emphasized the importance of exercising this right (see the first quotation). Some respondents quoted the phrase, "If you don't vote, you can't complain" to

explain their philosophy towards voting (see the second quotation), including one respondent who questioned the voting system's effectiveness (see the third quotation). Some respondents talked more specifically about the importance of voting for their representatives or voting on the laws that governed them (see the fourth quotation). As shown in the fifth quotation, a few voiced their concern over some Americans' lack of interest in voting. Finally, one African-American respondent discussed the efforts people have taken to ensure the right to vote (see the sixth quotation), and another African-American respondent talked about the current Voting Rights Bill that is soon to expire (see the seventh quotation).

> [Voting] is important because this is our country, and we all have the right and the opportunity, and we also have the duty, as American citizens, to help shape what is done and what the government does and what is right and what is wrong. And we all need to exercise that right to vote. Everyone needs to have the same opportunity to do that. [Female, 60, Caucasian]

> I try to vote. I think it's a very important right and privilege, but also [a] responsibility. The old saying, 'If you don't vote, don't complain' – I think that's true. [Male, 44, Caucasian]

> I think you should vote. But again, I don't think it does any good. It's your obligation to vote. You can't complain if you don't vote. (Why do you think it does no good?) The way the political system works, I think money runs the government. [Male, 36, Caucasian]

> I think [voting] is very important. I think that's one of the few ways that we as individuals can exert influence over the elected politicians. Because I think as one person, you don't have a lot to say, but if you can get together as a group or as a voting bloc, you have some influence. [Female, 42, Caucasian]

> [Voting] is extremely important to me. And we unfortunately have 50 percent of Americans that don't think it's important. Even the presidential election had 50 percent of Americans not voting. And I think that's really tragic. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> Oh, voting's very important to me because I understand what so many of my relatives and people of my same race in the past had to go through in order to get that privilege for me. I think a lot of people look at it as just something to do, and it's not that big of a deal, but I understand that people died for something that I can do so freely now. And I take it very seriously. [Male, 22, African-American]

> Voting is personally important to me, and it will always be important to me. The Voting Rights Bill of 1965 that President Johnson signed into law gave black people a voice that they did not have. And I take advantage of that opportunity every time I go to the polls. And I register my kids to take advantage of that opportunity. Voting is the one voice that American people – black, white, Jew, Gentile – have where they can make a decision based on how they feel and not

> how nobody else tells them, they can go in and check yes or no, based on what they want, how they feel. No intimidation is involved because you are in an isolated booth. So I think everybody should exercise that right. Now, it's interesting that in 2007, they will have to review the Voting Rights Bill that was passed in 1965. [Male, 30, African-American]

The majority of Space & Rocket Center respondents could not cite any voting rights issue they were concerned about. Among those respondents who discussed voting rights issues, two talked about the lack of voter participation (see the first quotation), and two others talked about problems with the voting system (see the second quotation). Other voting rights issues, each cited by one respondent, include lack of voter knowledge, media bias, and accessibility (see the third, fourth, and fifth quotations). In response to this question, a few respondents talked about their position on various issues not related to voting rights.

> I think maybe anywhere from 15 to 20 percent of people that are registered vote – or that are able to be registered – vote now. [Male, 22, African-American]

> I think in certain places where people are registered to vote under aliases and will vote four and five times – that needs to be investigated and [they] need to be punished to the fullest extent of the law. [Male, 28, Caucasian]

> I'm not into trying to get somebody out there just to punch a ticket – because they're not going to punch it knowledgeably. The problem is not whether you're going to vote or not. The problem is whether you have the knowledge to vote. And we got a lot of, 'Just go in and vote. And here's what to vote.' Well, then now they're just voting on what somebody told them to do. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> Most people who work in public media – whether it's commercial television or radio or newspapers or print kinds of endeavors – are paid to represent their particular company's point of view, and are not necessarily unbiased. So it's difficult for people to get the proper information to be able to, in an informed way, make good decisions on complex voting issues. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

> Making [voting] very accessible, making it easy. I know so many people that probably wouldn't bother to go vote when they get off work because they don't want to go stand in line, and that would be horrible. So just keeping it easily accessible. [Female, 28, Caucasian]

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The evaluator gave respondents a list of eight interpretive theme statements to read (see Appendix C) and then asked a series of questions regarding the themes.

The majority of respondents from both sites said nothing in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March Interpretive Plan surprised them, offended them, or appeared false or biased. When asked, Civil Rights Institute respondents were more likely to have an emotional reaction to the Interpretive Plan compared to Space & Rocket Center respondents. Among respondents who reacted emotionally, most were moved by the risks participants in the march took to ensure civil rights for all Americans.

Respondents' interest in the personal sacrifice of marchers is also reflected in the themes they selected as most interesting. Respondents at both sites selected Theme 2, "the willingness of individuals to risk everything," as most interesting more often than any other theme. Respondents at both sites were also interested in the "use of nonviolent protest" in the Civil Rights Movement, since nonviolence connects the movement to worldwide efforts to secure civil rights. Some respondents at the Civil Rights Institute were also interested in the "struggle of African-Americans to realize the dream and right of full citizenship;" however, no respondents at the Space & Rocket Center selected this theme as most interesting. Most respondents at both sites did not select a theme as least interesting.

The Voting Rights Act is important to some respondents, particularly those interviewed at the Civil Rights Institute, because it gives them a voice. Respondents discussed how the Act gives all citizens the opportunity to elect officials and influence legislation. African-American respondents also talked about the Act granting them the right to vote. Some respondents, particularly those interviewed at the Space & Rocket Center, talked more generally about the Act allowing for greater equality among Americans.

Civil Rights Institute Respondents

When asked, most Civil Rights Institute respondents said nothing about the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March Interpretive Plan surprised them. Two respondents were surprised to learn about the racial divide that had existed at that time, one was surprised to learn that Selma was the starting point of the march, and another was surprised to learn about the role of ordinary people in obtaining voting rights (see the quotation below). No Civil Rights Institute respondents could describe anything among the interpretive themes that offended them or that they felt was false or biased.

> I do [find something surprising] – the one here – 'Through the use of nonviolent protest, ordinary people worked to mobilize and sustain the modern Civil Rights Movement …' [THEME 4] It wasn't persons in high positions. It was ordinary people. [Male, 60, African-American]

When asked directly about emotional reactions they may have had after reading the interpretive themes, some Civil Rights Institute respondents talked about how others fought for civil rights

(see the first and second quotations). A few said that the theme statements caused them to think about the current state of civil rights. Some respondents did not react emotionally to the themes.

> The realization of where we've come from and where we have to go, and the fact that the young people just don't seem to have a clue. It's quite disturbing. . . . They don't realize to vote, how hard it was, or the opportunity to attend schools or colleges, what other people sacrificed to get this for them. [Female, 58, African-American]

> As I think about it, people giving their lives up for a cause – for something they truly believed in. [Female, 48, African-American]

More Civil Rights Institute respondents (two-fifths) selected Theme 2, "the willingness of individuals to risk everything" as most interesting to them compared to all other theme statements. Respondents were impressed by the sacrifices people made in securing the right to vote (see the first and second quotations). Approximately one-fifth of respondents selected Theme 5, "the struggle of African-Americans to realize the dream" as most interesting because people had the desire to fight for their rights as American citizens (see the third quotation). A few people selected Theme 4, "through the use of nonviolent protest," as most interesting because using non-violence tied the Civil Rights Movement to global pursuits for freedom (see the fourth quotation). Two respondents selected Theme 1 as most interesting because it concisely stated what this historical event was about (see the fifth quotation), two respondents were interested in Theme 8, and one cited Theme 7 as interesting. One respondent selected Theme 3 as most interesting because it emphasized the commitment of individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Movement.

> (Why is that of most interest to you?) Because people that really got involved with voting rights, they stood a very good chance of losing their lives, and they were just willing to risk everything so that I could vote. [Female, 48, African-American]

> I like the second one. (What about that is of interest to you?) Because they pretty much lost everything. People that were actually involved got threatened by police. . . . Some people even lost jobs. . . . So a lot of people lost their livelihood. [Female, 35, African-American]

> Most interesting to me personally. I think it was this one. ("The struggle of African-Americans to realize the dream," and why is that interesting to you?) Well, they realized, 'Hey, I want to be free. I want to be an American citizen.' And they struggled and strived to do that. [Male, 19, African-American]

> I think the fourth bullet is tremendously significant. I think that may be helping people beyond just gaining equality for African-Americans. I think that may have been the last legacy of the movement, nonviolent change as a method of obtaining people's rights. [Male, 54, Caucasian]

> The Voting Rights Act was not really explained to me when I was in school. I've been through school, I have an undergraduate degree, but the Voting Rights Act was not an issue that was focused on. [Female, 28, African-American]

Many respondents had difficulty selecting a theme as "least interesting," some stating that all the themes interested them (see the first quotation). Two respondents selected Theme 7 as least interesting because they thought the Civil Rights Movement was widespread and that the march could have taken place anywhere (see the second quotation).

> That's a really tough question, because they're all really significant. I think together it's comprehensive of the reality and the history, so it's really difficult [to select one as least interesting]. I think they're all really important. [Male, 48, Mixed]

> Well, just the fact that Selma was the starting point, that would probably be the least important to me. Because maybe just the right circumstances came about to make it happen there, but things were happening all over the world, all over the country, and there are probably a lot of places where a lot of things much worse were happening. But perhaps because they had started their own business community, they had access to schools, made it possible for a movement like this to get started in Selma, as opposed to some of the places in Mississippi, where the people were more at the mercy of the people they worked for, less educated and more dependent. [Female, 58, African-American]

Finally, the interviewer asked respondents how the Voting Rights Act is important to their lives. Most Civil Rights Institute respondents talked about the importance of having a voice, some talking about the empowerment that voting gives them (see the first quotation). Some respondents cited voting as the method by which they participate in the governing of our country by electing their representatives and voting on laws (see the second quotation). Some respondents talked about the Act ensuring African-Americans the right to vote, and one cited the upcoming reconsideration of the Act (see the third quotation). As shown in the fourth quotation, a few respondents said the Act ensures "freedom" and "equality," and a few respondents discussed the importance of exercising the right to vote (see the fifth quotation). Finally, a few respondents said the struggle others endured to ensure the right to vote was significant (see the sixth quotation), and two respondents discussed the Act's importance in propelling the Civil Rights Movement forward.

> I think it's very important, because if I didn't have a voice or a say in who was going to be running the government or who would be in charge of things that affect my life, then I would feel very controlled or held down and bound, because I wouldn't have a say in what was going on, and I wouldn't be able to say, 'Well, I don't [want] that. Let's try and get that changed.' I would just have to go with it, and there was nothing I could do about it. So I think it is very important. [Male, 19, African-American]

> It's important to me because it gives me a chance to participate in what happens. I go to community zone meetings, I work the polls. If you care, and if you want a voice, you have to participate. And voting is one of the best ways of participating and making your voice heard. [Female, 58, African-American]

> [The Voting Rights Act is] very important, because without it, as an African-American, I wouldn't be able to vote. . . . And I think it's something that needs to be a final vote and established into law, whereas it's not up for reconsideration every 25 years, because nobody else's voting rights are up but ours. So I feel as though it needs to be put into law and never brought back up again. [Female, 28, African-American]

> I think it's very, very important. I think that all men are created equal, and I think they should be treated equally. And I can't believe it took so long. [Female, 56, Caucasian]

> Voting is a constitutional right that should be everybody's birthright effective on the date of your 18th birthday. So how does it affect you? It affects your entire lifestyle from birth to death. If you don't seek the right to vote, or if you don't exercise it – because you can have the right to vote and not exercise it – then you're really not reaching your effective potential as a citizen of the United States. [Female, 43, African-American]

> I like to express my right to vote. And those that cried blood, sweat, and tears to get it, I think that it should be appreciated and used. I think that it's important, and I think that it has influenced a lot of people's lives, long as we keep on voicing our opinion. [Male, 18, African-American]

Space & Rocket Center Respondents

Almost all Space & Rocket Center respondents said that nothing they read from the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March Interpretive Plan surprised them. One respondent was surprised that Selma was intentionally selected for the march (see the first quotation), and another respondent was surprised to recall how, as a child, he was unaware of what was occurring in other parts of the country at that time (see the second quotation). When asked whether anything offended them, all but two Space & Rocket Center respondents said that nothing offended them. One said that he was offended when people use civil rights as an "excuse" (see the third quotation), and one respondent was offended by the general overemphasis on civil rights (see the fourth quotation). All respondents said they could not cite anything from the Interpretive Plan as false or biased, and some said they were generally not familiar with this historical event.

> Yeah, [I was surprised by] the one [theme] where Selma was selected as a good site to have this march. I didn't know that. I thought it was just sort of a spontaneous, 'this week, we'll be marching across the bridge,' kind of thing. [Male, 33, Caucasian]

> I'm amazed to this day how much in ignorance I was in, in California. [Male, 54, Caucasian]
>
> It offends me nowadays sometimes when people use civil rights as an excuse for lawsuits and stuff like that. Even though I know that bigotry still [exists], that it's still here, I think it's overdone sometimes. I think that it's used as an excuse sometimes. [Male, 40, Caucasian]
>
> Just the fact that they take it [civil rights] to the extreme, and it's wore out. Like I said, everybody has a right to vote now, so it's a part of history, but it's only one part of Alabama history, and none of it interests me. [Female, 39, Caucasian]

When asked what emotional reactions they may have had regarding the interpretive themes, most Space & Rocket Center respondents said they did not have an emotional reaction to the themes. A few respondents said that they were emotional when thinking about the risks that other people have taken to promote civil rights (see the first quotation). One respondent replied that, as an African-American, he always has a somewhat emotional reaction to events or issues regarding civil rights (see the second quotation). Finally, one respondent was angered that government money was being used to fund the exhibit (see the third quotation).

> Just remembering some of the struggles that people went through back then to try to just have their basic rights recognized – rights they already had constitutionally, that were just denied. [Male, 44, Caucasian]
>
> Any time I read anything about the Selma March, or anything with civil rights, being a man of color, it does have an impact on me and always will. Because I still think I'm trying – or this race of people is trying – to achieve equality. [Male, 30, African-American]
>
> I really don't understand why you're doing it. (Tell me more about what you mean.) Tell me again who's doing this? (The National Park Service.) . . . I can't see any reason for it. It's just another waste of government money. [Female, 69, Caucasian]

Among Space & Rocket Center respondents who cited one theme as most interesting, the majority selected Theme 2, "the willingness of individuals to risk everything." Respondents talked about how much people sacrificed for the cause, and two of these respondents commented that such a level of commitment is rare in today's society (see the first and second quotations). A few respondents selected Theme 4 as most interesting, stating that nonviolent protest was a universal method for achieving civil rights (see the third quotation). A few respondents also selected Theme 3 as most interesting, one pointing out that many individuals, including non-African-Americans, worked together in the Civil Rights Movement (see the fourth quotation). Themes 6 and 7 were each selected by two Space & Rocket Center respondents. A few respondents said that they were not able to select one theme as most interesting, and that overall

the plan seemed interesting to them. Finally, a few respondents said that they were uninterested in the Interpretive Plan altogether (see the fifth quotation).

> 'The willingness of individuals to risk everything' [Theme 2], that's probably the one that would get my attention. (Why is that?) Just because people going on their beliefs and risking everything, is everything. If risking everything means risking everything, including, I guess, your life, then that's pretty big. You got to believe in what you're doing. [Male, 32, Caucasian]

> I find that [Theme 2] pretty interesting. (Why?) A lot of what people back then did, they did for the good of everyone, whereas a lot of things that happen today are for the good of the individual. And even a lot of public figures that get on TV that are speaking for their people, they come across as, 'I'm out for me' and 'I'm out for my career, where I can go with this and what I can do, and what doors are going to open up for me. . . . ' So just the fact that they were thinking of the future, and not of their personal career and future. [Female, 28, Caucasian]

> (Why is Theme 4 of interest to you?) Well, to go back to Martin Luther King [Jr.], he tried through nonviolence to make everybody equal to each other. So I think that's very important to me, that for years and years, people have tried to make it right – not through fighting and all that – just through talking to each other and trying to make each other understand that we are the same. [Female, 40, African-American]

> I think in order to get more people to come to your park, you need to have it not just based on African-Americans, because they didn't do it by themselves. They had a lot of help from other people, too. [Female, 48, Caucasian]

> This is all a racial thing, and none of it would interest me. Everybody has the right to vote nowadays, and so I don't see where anybody's being discriminated against. If anything, I think whites are discriminated against now. [Female, 39, Caucasian]

Most respondents did not select one theme as "least interesting," and many said that all the themes interested them (see the first quotation). Two respondents selected Theme 7 as least interesting and two respondents selected Theme 8 as least interesting.

> The whole [Civil] Rights Movement and everything is interesting to me. [Male, 40, Caucasian]

Finally, Space & Rocket Center respondents were asked in what ways the 1965 Voting Rights Act is important to their lives. Some respondents said that the Act was important in that it contributed to greater equality among Americans (see the first quotation), and a couple of respondents pointed out that the Act played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement (see the second quotation). Some respondents discussed how the Act affected and continues to affect who is elected and what laws are passed (see the third and fourth quotations). As shown in the

fifth quotation, a few respondents talked about how the Voting Rights Act gives them a voice. Finally, a few respondents said that the Act was not important to their lives.

> [The Act was important in] how it shapes our country and the rights of the citizens in general. It affects the country that I live in, trying to get us all equal rights as citizens of this country. [Female, 60, Caucasian]

> Well, it was a milestone, and I think the issue of voters' rights is always going to be something that we're concerned with, and we need to protect it as best we can. [Male, 49, Caucasian]

> Because it affects who does vote, which certainly affects who our leaders are, which certainly affects laws that are made. So it affects my life a lot. [Male, 44, Caucasian]

> I don't know that it was important to my life, other than the fact that you got a greater diversity of people voting and electing officials, and therefore, if we didn't have them, things would be different. We wouldn't have the kind of society we have now. It would be more straitlaced and structured. Whether that's good or bad, I can't tell you. [Female, 48, Caucasian]

> Well, it'll always be important to my life, because it gave me a voice. If the Voting Rights Act of 1965 wasn't passed, I could never vote. I couldn't have voted in any presidential election, couldn't have voted for my city councilmen, my mayor. I couldn't have voted for amendments or referendums. So it had a profound impact on me, because it gave not only me, but black America and minority America – it gave them a voice. [Male, 30, African-American]

TEACHERS' REACTIONS

The initial evaluation plan for this project included conversations with Alabama teachers regarding the Visitor Center's exhibition plan. While conducting interviews with a representative sample of Alabama teachers proved logistically difficult, there is some information available about teachers' reactions to the subject matter.

In an evaluation conducted by RK&A for the State of Alabama Department of Archives and History in 2002,[1] Alabama teachers indicated aspects of Alabama history that students easily understand and aspects that are difficult for students. A few teachers indicated civil rights as an area students can understand when presented with images or stories that communicate the personal side of an historic event. Some teachers specifically named the Spider Martin Civil Rights photography exhibit on display at the Archives in Montgomery as compelling because students were able to connect with the emotion portrayed in the photographs, making history more real to them. Teachers also indicated that students have difficulty understanding segregation since such social norms are different from what they currently experience.

In this evaluation, the interviewer also asked teachers to indicate the best methods for presenting complex social concepts, such as civil rights, to students. Teachers discussed that students have difficulty understanding how social divisions, such as segregation, existed. In the classroom, teachers present the personal side of social issues, using first-hand stories or role-playing, to teach these difficult subjects.

RK&A talked to two teachers (one high school teacher and one university professor who instructs middle school teachers) specifically about the Selma to Montgomery Visitor Center exhibition plan. Both teachers described students' baseline knowledge about civil rights as concentrating on a few key people, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Governor George Wallace. They said that while students are familiar with the Voting Rights March they generally do not understand the significance of the March, particularly in relationship to the Voting Rights Act.

These teachers suggested first-hand accounts, oral histories, video clips, and photographs as excellent methods for presenting the March to students. These teachers also discussed activities that involve the students, such as role-playing, as effective teaching methods. One teacher also suggested providing activities for students to do before and during their visit to help facilitate the learning process.

Finally, when provided with the list of interpretive themes (see Appendix C), both teachers named Theme 7 "Selma, Alabama was selected as the starting point of the Voting Rights Movement" as less familiar to students.

[1] Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (2002). "Talking with Teachers: Results from Interviews with Alabama Teachers." Unpublished manuscript. Montgomery, AL: The State of Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Appendix A
Interview Guide

My name is _____ and today I am talking with visitors about some new exhibits being planned by the National Park Service. This interview has been approved by The Office of Management and Budget in compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act. The OMB control number, expiration date, and additional information about this interview and its approval is available at your request. The questions I would like to ask will only take about **15** minutes to complete. Would you be willing to participate? All of your answers are voluntary and confidential. I would like to record this conversation, is that alright with you?

1. Visitors' knowledge and perceptions
How would you describe American race relations in the 1950s and 1960s?
Do you have personal experiences or memories regarding segregation and/or racial prejudice that you can describe?
In what ways do you think racial relations in Alabama were different from or similar to the rest of the country during this time?
Are you at all familiar with the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March?
What do you think this march was about? Do you know what happened historically?
What aspects of this particular historical event, if any, do you think are misrepresented? [If needed: In other words, do you think the telling of this story is biased, exaggerated, or false?]

2. Visitors' current attitudes and opinions
What do you think about the current state of race relations in the United States?
In what ways, if any, is the issue of civil rights in America a concern for you?
Explain the ways in which voting is or is not important to you personally?
Do you think there are any contemporary voting rights issues that Americans should be concerned about? Please explain.

3. Interpretive themes
Please read through this one-page document which explains some themes of the planned exhibits. (Show page.)
Was anything you read surprising to you?
Did anything you read offend you? Please explain.
Do you think any of this material is false or biased? Please explain.
What emotional reactions, if any, did you have to this material?
Thinking about these themes, which concepts are most interesting to you personally? Which themes did you find least interesting?
In what ways, if any, do you think the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is important to you life?

Finally, I have a few demographic questions for you. Where are you from? What is your age?

What is your ethnicity? (show ethnicity/race card) What is your race? You may choose one or more categories. (show ethnicity/race card)

Record on log ethnicity/ race from questions and gender, visit group type and size based on observation.

Appendix B
List of Respondents

Place	Id	Gender	Live	Age	Race	Group
Huntsville	JK1	Female	WI	42	Caucasian	2 adults
Space	JK3	Female	IN	65	Caucasian	2 adults
& Rocket	JK4	Female	AL	28	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
Center	JK5	Male	AL	40	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK6	Male	United Kingdom	32	Caucasian	alone
	JK7	Male	FL	31	Caucasian	alone
	JK8	Male	AR	45	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK9	Male	AL	30	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK10	Male	MT	49	Caucasian	2 adults
	JK11	Female	AL	60	Caucasian	3+ adults
	JK12	Female	IN	48	Caucasian	2 adults
	JK13	Female	AL	39	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK14	Male	AL	28	Caucasian	alone
	JK15	Male	NC	44	Caucasian	3+ adults
	JK16	Male	AR	54	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK17	Female	TN	40	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK18	Female	TN	69	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	PL1	Female	MO	54	Caucasian	2 adults
	PL2	Male	GA	22	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	PL3	Male	AL	33	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	PL4	Male	NE	55	Caucasian	alone
	PL5	Male	CA	50	Asian	alone
	PL6	Female	IN	45	Caucasian	alone
	PL7	Male	AL	36	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	PL8	Male	NC	39	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)
	PL9	Male	TX	29		2 adults
	PL10	Female	Germany	23	Caucasian	2 adults
	PL11	Male	Kosovo	18	Caucasian	3+ adults
Birmingham	JK19	Female	GA	28	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
Civil	JK20	Male	GA	44	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
Rights	JK21	Female	AL	30	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
Institute	JK22	Female	TX	85	Caucasian	2 adults
	JK23	Male	MS	19	African-American	3+ adults
	JK24	Male	GA	65	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK25	Female	GA	58	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK26	Female	AL	40	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK27	Female	GA	43	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK28	Female	AL	35	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK29	Female	AL	45	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
	JK30	Male	CA	48	Mixed	alone

JK31	Male	AL	35	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
JK32	Female	GA	48	African-American	3+ adults
JK33	Female	GA	29	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL12	Male	IN	54	Caucasian	alone
PL13	Male	AZ	51	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL14	Female	AL	23	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL15	Male	AL	33	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL16	Male	MI	39	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL17	Female	GA	59	African-American	3+ adults
PL18	Female	GA	63	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL19	Female	GA	53	African-American	3+ adults
PL20	Male	AL	21	African-American	alone
PL21	Male	CA	18	African-American	3+ adults
PL22	Female	NY	21	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL23	Male	AL	60	African-American	adult(s)+child(ren)
PL24	Female	OK	56	Caucasian	adult(s)+child(ren)

Appendix C
Interpretive Themes

The 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March Interpretive Plan.

1. The Selma to Montgomery March resulted in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which enfranchised citizens previously denied the right to vote. This act changed and continues to change the political, economic, and social fabric of the American experience.

2. The willingness of individuals to risk everything – their lives and livelihoods – for the right to vote raise national awareness of the value and meaning of the democratic process.

3. Courageous and committed individuals, working through a variety of community institutions and nationally recognized groups, played pivotal roles in bringing about vast change to the social and political landscape of American society for present and future generations.

4. Through the use of nonviolent protest, ordinary people worked to mobilize and sustain the modern Civil Rights Movement, a movement that became an example for other worldwide democratic movements.

5. The struggle of African-Americans to realize the dream and right of full citizenship as guaranteed by the United States Constitution forced this country to live up to its ideals of equality for all.

6. The cultural landscape and environment is reflective of the social, economic, and legal systems that resulted in the modern Civil Rights Movement, images of which helped shape the national reaction and response.

7. Selma, Alabama was selected as the starting point of the Voting Rights Movement of 1965 because of the convergence of several crucial political, social, and economic factors, which were inclusive of the location/geography.

8. The efforts of those involved in the Selma to Montgomery March are part of the continuum within the civil and human rights struggle of African-Americans from slavery to modern times.